UNITED
NATIONS

EP

Governing Council
of the United Nations
Environment Programme

Distr.
GENERAL

UNEP/GC.20/11
4 January 1999

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Twentieth session
Nairobi, 1-5 February 1999
Item 4 (c) of the provisional agenda*

POLICY ISSUES: COORDINATION AND COOPERATION WITHIN AND OUTSIDE THE UNITED NATIONS, INCLUDING NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa: 1997-1998

Report of the Executive Director

Summary

The present report, prepared in accordance with Governing Council decisions 19/17 of 7 February 1997 and SS.V/7 of 22 May 1998, covers assistance provided by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to countries affected by desertification and drought, especially those in Africa, in the context of the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa. Such assistance is seen as being provided through direct support to countries, regions and subregions, especially in the context of formulating and implementing action programmes. It is also detailed under support to project development and implementation through the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and in direct and indirect support to the Convention to Combat Desertification, especially through UNEP's work on behalf of the Committee on Science and Technology of the Convention.

Suggested action by the Governing Council

The Governing Council may wish to consider the adoption of a decision along the following lines:

* UNEP/GC.20/1.

For reasons of economy, this document is printed in a limited number. Delegates are kindly requested to bring their copies to meetings and not to request additional copies.

The Governing Council,

Recalling its decisions 19/17 of 7 February 1997 and SS.V/7 of 22 May 1998,

Recognizing that land degradation is a major problem for many countries, particularly those in Africa,

Recalling the experience of the United Nations Environment Programme in developing desertification assessments, databases and its two editions of the World Atlas of Desertification, its research initiatives and cooperative studies with the Scientific Committee on Problems of the Environment of the International Council of Scientific Unions, its co-sponsorship of the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research and the numerous joint programmes and studies on desertification with various centres of the Consultative Group and with other United Nations organizations,

Considering the concerns regarding the vulnerability of African soils to the impacts of climate change due to land degradation and desertification as expressed at the Ministerial Session of the Special Consultation of African Ministerial Conference on Environment on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol and related Multilateral Environmental Agreements, held in Nairobi in October 1998 (UNEP/AMCEN/CONSULT.1/5, para. 33 (a));

Welcoming the efforts of the United Nations Environment Programme in assisting countries affected by land degradation, in strengthening cooperation and collaboration with other relevant United Nations bodies and agencies and other organizations in the field of land degradation, in developing land-degradation projects as they relate to the focal areas of the Global Environment Facility and the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with the United Nations Development Programme in the context of these activities, and in assisting Governments in the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa,

1. Requests the Executive Director to maintain the capability of the United Nations Environment Programme to respond to global land-degradation issues so as to serve its role as Task Manager for Agenda 21, 1/ chapter 12 (and related other chapters), and in supporting the Conference of Parties to the Convention to Combat Desertification, in particular its Committee on Science and Technology in the assessment and monitoring of desertification and the enhancement of the scientific and technological knowledge base on land degradation;

2. Requests the Executive Director to continue efforts to secure and enhance support from the Global Environmental Facility for providing

---

1/ Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992, A/CONF.151/26/Rev.1 (Vol. I and Vol. I/Corr.1, Vol. II, Vol. III and Vol. III/Corr.1)) (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigenda), Vol. I: Resolutions Adopted by the Conference, resolution 1, annex II.

assistance to countries to carry out activities related to land degradation in view of the interlinkages between land degradation and the focal areas of the Global Environmental Facility;

3. Also requests the Executive Director to strengthen coordination and collaboration with relevant United Nations bodies and agencies and other organizations concerned in providing assistance to countries in mitigating land degradation and the implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification;

4. Further requests the Executive Director, in cooperation with other bodies, particularly the Secretariat of the Convention to Combat Desertification, the Global Mechanism under the Convention and the other implementing agencies of the Global Environment Facility, as well as relevant regional and subregional organizations, to assist countries affected by land degradation, in the development of a pipeline of land-degradation projects for financing by the Global Environment Facility and other relevant financial mechanisms.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION IN THOSE COUNTRIES EXPERIENCING SERIOUS DROUGHT AND/OR DESERTIFICATION, PARTICULARLY IN AFRICA: 1997-1998

1. Pursuant to Governing Council decisions 19/17 and SS V/7, UNEP has continued to support countries in the implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa, but because of reduced allocations the programme of work could not be implemented as envisaged.

2. In terms of activities at national level, UNEP supported the implementation of the Convention in the countries members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), using resources from the Russian Fund, in line with the decisions of the Almaty and Tashkent conferences of 1995 and 1997, respectively. The $4 million worth of contributions to UNEP from the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, held in the Russian Fund, were unfrozen in 1995 for use specifically on UNEP projects in the Russian Federation.

3. Following the development of the national action programme for the Kalmyk Republic in the Russian Federation, UNEP is now supporting the implementation of a project on the reclamation and management of the Black Lands and the stabilization of moving sands in Kalmykia. The completion of the national action programme for Kazakhstan in 1997 was followed by awareness-raising campaigns on the issue in 1998. The programme for Uzbekistan is still under preparation. UNEP also supported a training course in desertification control for 28 participants from CIS countries, which was held in Volgograd, in the Russian Federation, in October 1997.

4. In a drive to promote the ratification of the Convention to Combat Desertification by the Russian Federation and to catalyse action, UNEP assisted with awareness-raising activities in the region, by supporting the locally produced newsletter on desertification. In addition, the Kalmyk sequences of a film made for UNEP by Television Trust for the Environment (TVE) and financed by the Government of Norway, have been repackaged into Russian. Accompanied by a booklet and posters, the film is being disseminated to schools throughout the steppe region. A film in Russian on the problem of shifting sands invading south-eastern Europe was completed and an English version has been produced to ensure wider dissemination.

5. UNEP, with counterpart funds from the Government of Norway, is assisting in the awareness-raising component of the national-action-programme formulation process in South Africa, as a pilot project for outreach in the southern African region. A strategy meeting in December 1997 resulted in an action programme of activities to be undertaken for the launch of the awareness-raising campaign in June 1998. The launch took place on 17 June in Pretoria at the end of the National Environmental Film Festival.

6. UNEP has been particularly involved in the regional and subregional action-programme process, through participating in and supporting subregional meetings on the Convention. In 1997, such meetings were held in Cuba, Burkina Faso, China, Spain and the Syrian Arab Republic. In 1998, UNEP supported meetings for West Asia in Oman, for Asia and the Pacific in Japan and Thailand, and for Latin America and the Caribbean in Antigua and Barbuda and Brazil. UNEP offered to assist in coordinating the thematic programme

networks which are to be established under the regional action programme for Asia and the Pacific. UNEP further offered to host a regional coordination unit within the UNEP Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, and the associated memorandum of understanding between the Government of Mexico, the Secretariat of the Convention to Combat Desertification and UNEP was signed in July 1998.

7. Assistance was also provided for the development of subregional action programmes for the southern European (Kalmykia, Dagestan, and Tatarstan republics, Volgograd, Astrakhan, Saratov and Samara regions) and Asian (the republics of Tuva, Khakass and Buriatia) parts of the Russian Federation.

8. As part of a special focus on Africa, UNEP promoted the development of subregional action programmes for the members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), by supporting workshops to establish multidisciplinary scientific and technical consultative committees in Namibia, in June, and in Nairobi in July 1998. At the request of the Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), UNEP supported a workshop on women and decision-making, which was held in Dakar.

9. , UNEP also hosted and supported the Special Consultation of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol and Related Multilateral Environmental Agreements, held in Nairobi in October 1998, for which the UNEP Land Unit gave substantive inputs. In addition, UNEP supported a workshop on a network for the integration and management of international river, lake and hydrogeological basins in Africa, held in Abidjan in September 1998. The latter was one of the seven workshops called for in the context of the regional action programme to combat desertification for Africa by the Panafrican Conference on the Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and Follow-up in Africa of the Results of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Burkina Faso in March 1997. The report of the proceedings formed an input to the second meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention. UNEP has expressed its willingness to host the network through the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment.

10. Cooperation continued with other United Nations organizations and leading science and technology institutions and non-governmental organizations, such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations University (UNU), IUCN - The World Conservation Union, the members of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), the Scientific Committee on Problems of the Environment (SCOPE) of the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU) and others, contributing to a better understanding of the factors leading to land degradation and assisting countries to take action to control desertification. In this context, case-studies on population dynamics in the drylands of central Asia and the affected areas of eastern Europe, and on land tenure and environmental degradation in the Asia and Pacific region were undertaken. Further, UNEP, in cooperation with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the International Centre for

Agricultural Research in Dry Areas (ICARDA) and the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), organized an expert workshop for 19 participants entitled "Wind erosion in Africa and West Asia: problems and control strategies", which was held in Cairo in April 1997. Jointly with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), UNEP evaluated several potential success stories in desertification control, with "Saving the Drylands" awards being presented to worthy projects at the twentieth-anniversary meeting of IFAD and at the second meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention to Combat Desertification.

11. As a co-sponsor of CGIAR and partner of many of its centres, such as ICARDA, ICRISAT and the International Council for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF), UNEP contributed actively to many projects and programmes which add to the body of knowledge related to land degradation, one example being the Desert Margins Programme in nine sub-Saharan African countries, another multi-focus, multidisciplinary project which is being prepared partially for GEF funding. DMP implementation was facilitated by ICRISAT which has established a coordination office in Sadore, Niger. UNEP serves as a member of the Steering Committee on behalf of United Nations organizations and agencies.

12. Preliminary discussions were held in June 1998 between the Executive Director of UNEP and the Chief Executive Officer of GEF on UNEP's role in land degradation projects and UNEP-UNDP collaboration. UNEP initiatives in land degradation as it relates to the four other focal areas of GEF focused on assessments, regional, subregional and transboundary projects; demonstration, pilot and experimental approaches; targeted research and methodological frameworks; capacity-building and technical assistance and environmental information and reporting.

13. UNEP has started to implement a project largely financed by GEF and entitled "People Land Management and Environmental Change (PLEC)", executed by the United Nations University (UNU), which is a multi-disciplinary project on the conservation of agrodiversity in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and South and Central America that was initiated in February 1998. Activities began in March 1998. A meeting of the Steering Committee (of which UNEP is a member) was held in Tokyo in July 1998, and the first meeting of the Advisory Group was held in Paris, in September 1998. National and subnational activities under the project continued in all project clusters: East Africa, West Africa, Amazonia, China and Papua New Guinea.

14. Two other projects, on conserving biological diversity in the arid and semi-arid transboundary areas of Mauritania and Senegal and on managing indigenous vegetation to rehabilitate degraded rangelands in Botswana, Kenya and Mali, have both been developed by UNEP and UNDP and approved for GEF funding. Several others covering different countries of Africa are at earlier stages of development under GEF funding.

15. As an overall contribution to the implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification, UNEP has provided assistance to enable Government representatives and non-governmental organizations to attend Convention related meetings, and for government and non-governmental organization experts to participate in topical workshops and training courses related to desertification.

16. At the request of the Committee of Science and Technology of the Convention, during the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, and with funds provided by the Convention Secretariat, UNEP is leading a consortium to undertake a preliminary survey of organizations able to form part of a global network to support implementation of the Convention. UNEP also contributed to the consultative process on benchmarks and indicators of desertification held in Geneva in September 1998.

17. In line with the request for greater awareness raising contained in the Convention, UNEP also produced and disseminated targeted information on desertification control to a broad range of media and public at both national and global levels. Four issues of the Desertification Control Bulletin (Nos. 30, 31, 32 and 33) were produced, and new publications included National Land Degradation Assessment and Mapping in Kenya and Wind Erosion in Africa and West Asia: Problems and Control Strategies. The second edition of the World Atlas of Desertification was published in 1997. It summarizes the latest scientific knowledge on the drylands of the globe and was launched at the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention. Several films have also been developed to raise global awareness of the drylands in accordance with the articles of the Convention. One film, on migration and social problems and set in Ethiopia, was completed in November 1997. Another film for the World Service of the British Broadcasting Cooperation (BBC), on desertification as the legacy of past politics, featured Kalmykia and South Africa, while several short features were compiled for youth audiences, more information dissemination.

18. In the context of the second meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention to Combat Desertification, UNEP organized a workshop for 15 participants from non-governmental organizations, on synergies and the role of civil society and non-governmental organizations in the implementation of the Convention, which was held in Nairobi from 4 to 6 November 1998. The results of this workshop, stressing the need for better coordination between various environmental conventions, formed an input to the Conference of the Parties, and especially to the forum organized by IUCN on linking the biodiversity and desertification agendas, which was supported by UNEP and held in Dakar from 4 to 6 December 1998, in conjunction with the meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

UNITED
NATIONS

EP

Governing Council
of the United Nations
Environment Programme

Distr.
GENERAL

UNEP/GC.20/12
[illegible] January 1999

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Twentieth session
Nairobi, 1-5 February 1999
Item 4 (d) of the provisional agenda*

POLICY ISSUES: GOVERNANCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

Report on the work of the subsidiary bodies of the Governing Council

Note by the Executive Director

The Executive Director has the honour to transmit herewith the report on the work of the subsidiary bodies of the Governing Council, namely the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials and of the Committee of Permanent Representatives as requested by the respective bodies. The present report reviews the status of implementation of decision 19/32 of 4 April 1997 on governance of the United Nations Environment Programme, which established the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials and strengthened the Committee of Permanent Representatives.

* UNEP/GC.20/1.

For reasons of economy, this document is printed in a limited number. Delegates are kindly requested to bring their copies to meetings and not to request additional copies.

INTRODUCTION

1. The Governing Council, at the 10th plenary meeting of its nineteenth session, on 4 April 1997, adopted decision 19/32. In its preambular paragraphs, the Council recalled General Assembly resolution 2997 (XXVII) of 15 December 1972 on institutional and financial arrangements for international environmental cooperation, including the mandate of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme. The Council also recalled its decision 18/2 of 26 May 1995 on the review of the governing structures of the United Nations Environment Programme and reaffirmed the importance for the United Nations Environment Programme to continue to be the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, and to promote the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system.

2. The preambular paragraphs of decision 19/32 also emphasize the importance of democratic, efficient, transparent and representative governing structures of the United Nations Environment Programme, with a complementary, specific and distinct role and mandate for each of their components and recognize the need for properly mandated subsidiary bodies that can act during the inter-sessional period for and on behalf of the Governing Council within their respective mandates and the framework of the decisions adopted by the Council. Consequently, the Governing Council decided to establish the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials as a subsidiary body of the Governing Council, and to strengthen the Committee of Permanent Representatives.

I. HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS AND OFFICIALS

3. In its decision 19/32, the Governing Council gave the High-level Committee the following mandate:

(a) To consider the international environmental agenda and to make reform and policy recommendations to the Governing Council;

(b) To provide guidance and advice to the Executive Director on emerging environmental issues between sessions of the Governing Council to enable the United Nations Environment Programme to make a timely response;

(c) To enhance the collaboration and cooperation of the United Nations Environment Programme with other relevant multilateral bodies as well as with the environmental conventions and their secretariats;

(d) To support the Executive Director in mobilizing adequate and predictable financial resources for the United Nations Environment Programme for the implementation of the global environmental agenda approved by the Governing Council.

4. The Council also decided that the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials shall consist of 36 members, elected by the Governing Council from among Members of the United Nations and members of its specialized agencies,

for a period of two years, taking into account the principle of equitable regional representation as reflected in the composition of the Governing Council.

5. As decided by the Governing Council in a separate decision on the constitution of the Committee, the members of the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials were nominated by their regional groups and confirmed as elected at the fifth special session of the Governing Council on 20 May 1998.

6. The first meeting of the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials was held in New York on 28 June 1997. While it was an organizational meeting, it was of high importance in initiating a process of revitalization of UNEP, building upon the Nairobi Declaration on the Role and Mandate of UNEP. It provided an opportunity for a preliminary exchange of views on the implications for the future role and functioning of UNEP of the outcome of the recently concluded special session of the General Assembly for the purpose of an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21. It was also important that the Committee exchanged views on its future functioning to facilitate a policy-oriented dialogue on important global environmental issues. The report of the first meeting of the Committee was distributed to Governments as document UNEP/HLC/1/5 on 11 July 1997.

7. The second meeting of the Committee was held in Nairobi, from 2 to 4 March 1998, as its first substantive meeting. The Committee arrived at conclusions designed to send out positive signals on the challenges facing UNEP and to demonstrate its committed support to the Executive Director in implementing UNEP's programme. The conclusions of the Committee at its second meeting addressed: the status of the trust funds in support of the work of the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials; adequate, growing and predictable funding of UNEP; UNEP reform and revitalization in the context of United Nations reform; freshwater; and rules of procedure of the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials. The report of the second meeting of the Committee was distributed to Governments as document UNEP/HLC/2/6 on 26 March 1998.

8. The third meeting of the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials was held in Buenos Aires, on 10 November 1998, on the eve of the high-level segment of the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The third meeting of the Committee advised and provided guidance to the Executive Director on the various aspects of its agenda prior to the twentieth session of the Governing Council, in particular, on the reform of UNEP, the report of the United Nations Task Force on Environment and Human Settlements and on UNEP's contribution to the seventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

9. The conclusions of the Committee at its third meeting addressed: the implementation of the conclusions of the second meeting of the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials; the reform of UNEP; financing sustainable development - the role of UNEP in the financial mechanism; the contribution of UNEP to the seventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development on oceans, small island developing States, tourism and

consumption and production patterns; and the devastation caused by Hurricane Mitch. On the latter point, the Committee requested the preparation of an action plan for Central America oriented to bridge short-term relief with medium- to long-term environmentally sustainable development, in consultation with the United Nations Development Programme and other relevant United Nations agencies. The report of the third meeting of the Committee was distributed to Governments as document UNEP/HLC/3/5 and Corr.1 on 15 December 1998.

II. COMMITTEE OF PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES

10. Also, in its decision 19/32, the Governing Council decided to strengthen the Committee of Permanent Representatives, with the following mandate:

(a) Within the policy and budgetary framework provided by the Governing Council, to review, monitor and assess the implementation of decisions of the Council on administrative, budgetary and programme matters;

(b) To review the draft programme of work and budget during their preparation by the secretariat;

(c) To review reports requested of the secretariat by the Governing Council on the effectiveness, efficiency and transparency of the functions and work of the secretariat and to make recommendations thereon to the Governing Council;

(d) To prepare draft decisions for consideration by the Governing Council based on inputs from the secretariat and on the results of the functions specified above.

11. In accordance with decision 19/32 the strengthened Committee of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Environment Programme comprises of the representatives of all States Members of the United Nations and members of its specialized agencies, and the European Community accredited to UNEP, whether based in Nairobi or outside.

12. In accordance with the mandate given to it in decision 19/32, the committee has during the reporting period held its meetings on a quarterly basis and been active in reviewing, monitoring and assessing the implementation of the decisions of the Council on administrative, budgetary and programme matters.

13. In order to assist the Committee of Permanent Representatives in fully discharging its functions, two subcommittees and a joint subcommittee were established, and they regularly met to review and monitor the implementation of the decisions of the Governing Council adopted at its nineteenth session. Most recently, they held a series of meetings between mid July and mid September 1998 to review the implementation of the decisions on specific programme and administrative/management issues, and reported the outcome of those meetings at the sixty-fourth meeting of the Committee. In addition, other task forces and working groups were established by the Committee to help it carry out the specific tasks effectively.

14. The Committee of Permanent Representatives also collaborated closely with the secretariat in the preparation of the efficiency and management studies called for in Governing Council decision 19/22 of 7 February 1997, where the finding and recommendations of the Committee were substantive inputs into the report of the Executive Director on the management and administrative support of UNEP (UNEP/GCSS.V/4).

15. In its decision 19/29 B of 4 April 1997, the Council, taking note of the observations made in the 1997 report of the Office of the Internal Oversight Services (A/51/810, annex) on the review of the United Nations Environment Programme and the administrative practices of its secretariat, including the United Nations Office at Nairobi, and also taking note also of the request made by the Governing Council to the Executive Director in section II, paragraph 5, of its decision 19/22, to present a report containing an evaluation of the management and administrative support of the United Nations Environment Programme, requested the Committee of Permanent Representatives to make an assessment of the functioning of the secretariat of the United Nations Environment Programme and to make specific recommendations to the Governing Council at its twentieth session as to how to make the secretariat more efficient, effective and transparent. This report is before the Council at its twentieth session as document UNEP/GC.20/13.

16. In accordance with its mandate, the Committee of Permanent Representatives established a working group for the preparation of draft decisions for the twentieth session of the Governing Council. Between November 1998 and January 1999, that group held eighteen meetings to prepare the draft decisions on the basis of the documents for the Governing Council and other inputs received from Governments. Those draft decisions were or were to be subsequently endorsed by the Committee at its sixty-fifth meeting of 15 December 1998 and its extraordinary meeting to be held immediately before the twentieth session of the Council.